

Ukraine Crisis Update: May 7, 2015

1 May 1-2: Military convoys consisting of heavy artillery, tanks, and armored vehicles were spotted travelling through Luhansk city. The leader of the self-proclaimed Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) declared martial law in LNR-controlled territory on May 6, allegedly to tighten security ahead of Victory Day demonstrations.

2 May 1-6: Russian-backed separatists continued to shell Ukrainian positions around the Donetsk airport with heavy artillery, mortars, and tanks. Separatist leaders claimed that Ukrainian forces shelled civilian areas in Donetsk city on the night of May 2, and OSCE international monitors confirmed that shelling had taken place. "Grad" rockets were reportedly fired on Ukrainian positions near the city of Avdiivka on May 3. The Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) paraded armor and heavy weapons in Donetsk allegedly as a rehearsal for a Victory Day demonstration.

3 May 1-7: Russian-backed separatists shelled Ukrainian positions and launched infantry assaults against the village of Shyrokyne with heavy weapons. On May 4, Ukrainian soldiers reported that fighting in Shyrokyne lasted for twelve straight hours.

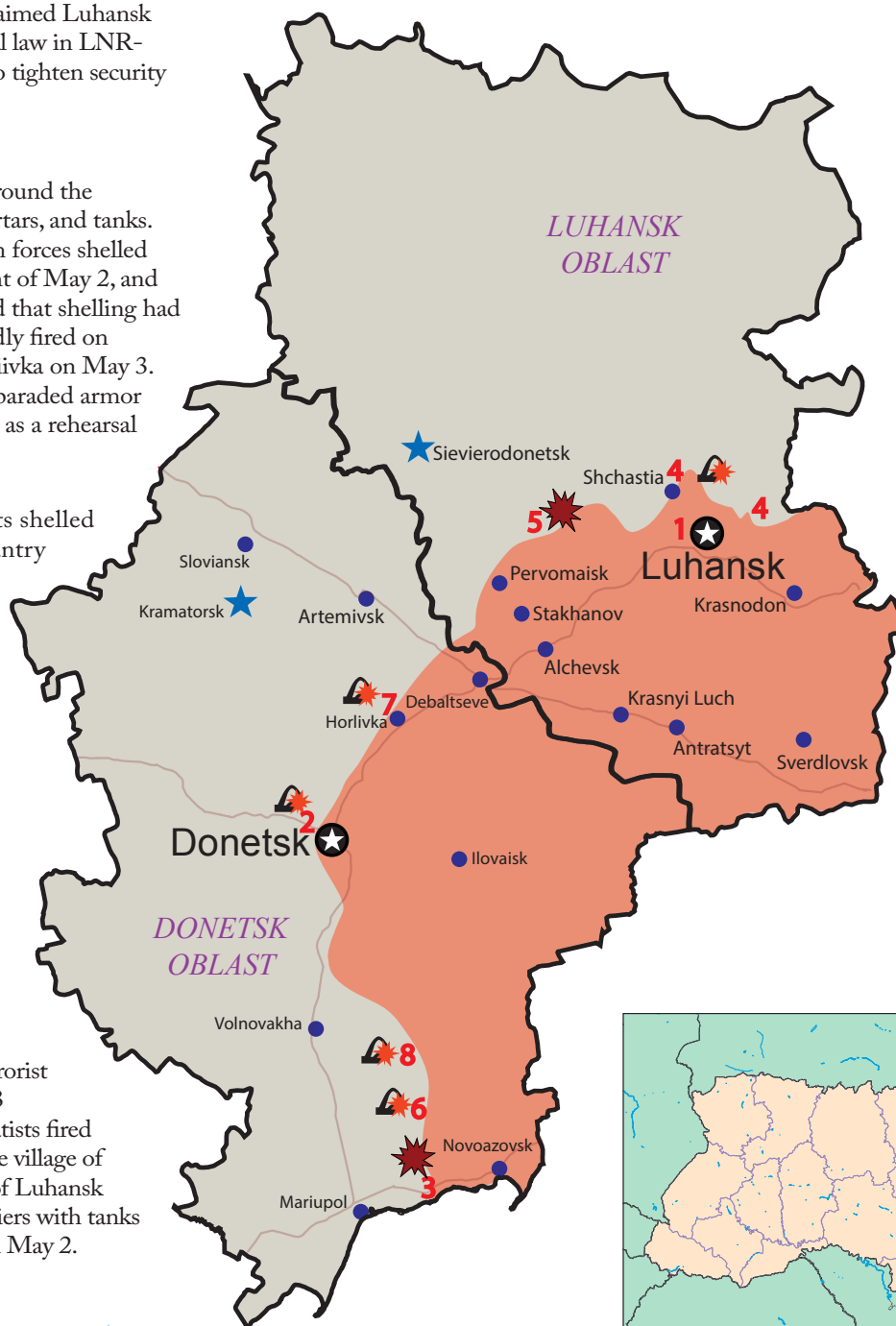
4 May 1-7: Russian-backed separatist forces fired on Ukrainian positions near the town of Stanytsia Luhanska (east) and the city of Shchastia (west) with small arms, automatic grenade launchers, and anti-aircraft guns. One civilian was wounded in Shchastia by separatist fire on May 6.

5 May 2-6: Russian-backed separatists shelled and assaulted Ukrainian Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) forces along the T1303 "Bakhmutka" highway. On May 3, Separatists fired "Grad" rockets on ATO positions near the village of Krymske. The Kyiv-appointed governor of Luhansk Oblast reported that regular Russian soldiers with tanks attacked the village of Novotoshkivske on May 2.

6 May 4-5: Russian-backed separatists shelled Ukrainian positions near the village of Chermalyk, around 20 kilometers northeast of Mariupol. Separatists continue to use heavy artillery and mortars to shell Ukrainian positions in the area.

7 May 3-6: Russian-backed separatists shelled Ukrainian Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) positions outside of the separatist-held city of Horlivka with heavy artillery and mortars. Separatists shelled civilian areas in the Ukrainian-held city of Dzerzhynsk on May 5 and 6, wounding two civilians and damaging homes. On May 6, a separatist reconnaissance group ambushed an ATO troop transport near the village of Artemove, killing one Ukrainian soldier and wounding six.

8 May 3-6: Russian-backed separatists shelled Ukrainian positions near the village of Hranitne using heavy artillery and mortars. One civilian was wounded by shelling on May 6.



- Donetsk People's Republic (DNR)
- Luhansk People's Republic (LNR)
- Cossack
- Combined Separatist
- Ukrainian Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO)
- ★ Acting Regional Admin Center
- ★ Regional Admin Center
- Separatist Held Territory
- ★ Major Clash
- ★ Indirect Fire



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ISW is issuing a warning about an imminent Russian-backed separatist offensive in eastern Ukraine on or around Victory Day, May 9, 2015. Further intensification of Russian-backed separatist attacks and the mobilization of separatist forces under the guise of preparations for Victory Day military parades celebrating the 70th anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany on May 9 may indicate preparations for a large-scale offensive. Russian-backed separatists increasingly employed "Grad" multiple launch rocket systems (MLRS) and other heavy weapons, previously withdrawn under the ceasefire agreement, in attacks on Ukrainian military positions. Civilian areas on both sides of the front line suffered an increase in indirect fire attacks, another indicator of intensified fighting. Russian-backed separatists have claimed that they redeployed heavy weapons, which international monitors have reported missing from storage sites, for peaceful purposes in preparation for Victory Day. Such claims are doubtful given the continued escalation of fighting and the uptick in shelling from banned heavy weapons. Columns of tanks and heavy weapons also appeared on the streets of Donetsk and Luhansk purportedly in rehearsal for Victory Day demonstrations. The Russian-backed separatist groups in Donetsk and Luhansk Oblast have bolstered their military presence in civilian areas, which the separatists have justified as security precautions against the possibility of Ukrainian military "provocations" on Victory Day. The Ukrainian military warned that the separatists may stage attacks on civilian areas under their control to frame Ukrainian forces and justify the ignition of offensive operations. As in January 2015, Russian-backed separatists may stage a high-casualty attack on civilians in order to fully rupture the ceasefire agreement and re-launch offensive maneuvers.